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Critical Notes

LAMENTATIONS 4:9

טוֹבִים הָיוּ הַלְלֵי־הָרֵב מִחֲלֵי רֶעֶב שֶׁהֵם יָזְבוּ מִדְּקָרִים מִתְנוּבוֹת שָׂדֵי :

The A.V. and R.V. translation of this verse is: "They that be slain with the sword are better than they that be slain with hunger: for these pine (margin, Heb. *flow*) away, stricken through, for want of the fruits of the field." According to this rendering, the clause "for these pine away, etc.," qualifies "they that be slain with hunger." Cook's note in the *Speaker's Commentary* is as follows: "As the verb (יָזְבוּ) properly means to 'flow away' and 'stricken through' (מִדְּקָרִים) is never used metaphorically but only literally of those pierced with a weapon, Professor Hornblower refers this clause to those 'slain with the sword' and translates, 'Happier were those slain by the sword, those pierced ones whose lives gushed forth while yet there were fruits of the field,' lit. 'from the produce of the field,' i.e., going directly from it to battle and being slain outright before famine began to appear. The clause is undoubtedly difficult." Most of the later commentators point out the same difficulty of applying מִדְּקָרִים to starving persons. But מִתְנוּבוֹת שָׂדֵי is an extraordinary way of expressing "while yet there were fruits of the field," although it has been adopted by several authorities. The suggestion in Adeney's footnote (*Expositor's Bible*) "fade away, stricken through, like the growth of the field" (reading, I suppose, כְּתְנוּבוֹת) leaves the difficulty of מִדְּקָרִים untouched, as does Ewald's emendation מִתְלַאֲבוֹת "by reason of the drought of the field." Thenius proposes the translation, "welche dahinschwinden (wie) durchbohrte (i.e., כְּמִדְּקָרִים), weil keine Früchte des Feldes vorhanden sind," referring the clause to הַלְלֵי רֶעֶב. Against this, however, it may be urged that the objection to מִדְּקָרִים applies also to יָזְבוּ which is nowhere else used figuratively. Budde, *Die Fünf Megillot*, offers no solution to the difficulty, but mentions De Hoop-Scheffer's

emendation מוקרים "for they pine away, consumed for want of the fruits of the field." Dyserinck accepts this emendation and reads פְּתוּבוֹת "consumed like the fruits." But יִזְבוּ is incompatible with this reading.

My suggestion is that the root of the difficulty is to be found in the interpretation placed on הללי רעב. If objection is raised to the use of מוקרים in a case where no actual weapons are employed, does this not also apply to הללי? Everywhere else it is used of those slain by a sword or some other weapon. Isa. 22:2, הלליך לא הללי, is no exception, if we interpret it as referring to the prisoners of war who were put to death after the battle was at an end. Lam. 4:10, be it noticed, speaks of the cannibalism to which Zion was reduced: "The hands of pitiful women have sodden their own children," and I suggest that הללי רעב refers to those who were slain in order to provide food—"slain by reason of famine." In place of יִזְבוּ I read יִזְדוּ Hoph'al of יָד. The Hoph'al does not occur in the Old Testament, but the Hiph'il does. The translation of the whole verse would thus be: "They that be slain with the sword are better than they that be slain because of famine; for these are sodden, pierced through for want of the fruits of the field." Vs. 10 follows quite naturally on this, and the use of the construct is to an extent paralleled by מתי מלחמה.

A. COHEN

PSALM 81:7

הַסִּירוֹתִי מִסֶּבֶל שְׁכֻמוֹ פִּשְׁיוֹ מִדֹּר תַּעֲבִרְנָה

Cheyne (Ps. 2) annotates as follows: "כַּפִּי cannot be right. We should expect פִּתְפִּי (שְׁכֻמוֹ ||). The ambiguous word דֹּר is also very improbable. The usual theory is that a basket for carrying clay to the brick-kiln is meant. But why is nothing said of the brick-making? Some MSS and edd. have מִדֹּר." This variant is given in Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica*, but, so far as I am aware, nobody has yet attempted to explain the reading דֹּר. Yet, strangely enough, there is evidence, although it is slight, of a Semitic word דֹּר with the meaning "load, burden," which if adopted here gives